

New Zealand Effie Awards 2016

Case Study

Category:	Retail/Etail
Award:	Gold
Agency:	.99
Client:	Ziera
Title:	'Fashion As It Should Be'

Summary

In 2015, women's footwear brand Ziera was losing customers, and relevance. Their comfort heritage had made them famous, but to drive sales growth in this highly competitive category they needed to appeal to a new audience segment: the style conscious. .99 posed the question: why should women be fashion victims, torturing themselves with uncomfortable shoes, when Ziera provided the perfect alternative? This provocative campaign sparked a debate, capturing the attention of millions, including the media, and re-positioned Ziera as a smart, empowering choice that allowed women to look fashionable without making sacrifices.

Key Learnings

Instead of trying to change Ziera's signature of comfort to attract a wider fashion-conscious audience, .99 focused on changing how women felt about fashion by attaching a positive meaning to comfort and re-positioning Ziera as an on-trend choice that didn't require them to sacrifice comfort for style.

Marketing Challenge & Objectives

In the lead-up to the crucial Autumn/Winter season 2016, Ziera had hit a crossroads. Penetration of its core audience was approaching saturation and starting to suffer from heightened competition. With declining year-on-year sales, Ziera had to look further afield for growth opportunities.

'Style-conscious' shoe-shoppers were identified as a market with substantial potential due to their higher volumes of purchase and willingness to pay more but the brand's image and Kumfs heritage were substantial issues to overcome – either not registering on the radar of the style-savvy targets, or achieving only very low consideration.

While most women knew Ziera meant comfort (going back to when they were known as Kumfs before a 2010 rebrand), the brand needed stronger fashion cues, as the new target audience still saw Ziera as a trade-off of 'comfort over style' that they weren't prepared to make.

The primary challenge for .99 was to overcome this 'label-tinge' and re-engineer the Ziera brand to appeal to the style-conscious without denigrating or confusing its appeal to its heartland. Additional challenges included Ziera's higher price point and the large investment usually involved in winter footwear, along with Ziera's lack of online shopping and a limited marketing budget.

The clear objective was to grow fans and sales with a strong position that resonated with fashion literate women and could overcome the negative pre-conceptions. It also needed to engage people and media to deliver reach, as the spend wouldn't deliver this on its own.

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Specific commercial objectives included increases in sales revenue, new customers to the brand, membership of the Ziera customer club and online engagement.

Creative Insight & Strategy

The strength and clarity of Ziera's current brand perception meant accepting that its signature was comfort and that wasn't going to change. Instead, .99 focused on changing how women felt about fashion, and specifically the role of comfort within it, by attaching a positive meaning to it.

A key insight was that high fashion can be highly ridiculous. .99's plan was to expose this, so every woman would get irritated every time their trendy high heels gave them blisters. From there, they'd start feeling differently about everything they were wearing, especially their shoes.

The intention was to empower women to make a stand, start asking why fashion couldn't feel good too and then see that Ziera's Autumn/Winter 2016 range was on-trend and felt incredible too.

The campaign centrepiece was a humorous, thought-provoking video that lampooned the ridiculous lengths some women will go for fashion while struggling with great looking, but poorly fitting high-heeled shoes. Designed to be provocative enough to share, the concluding line, 'Fashion As It Should Be', illustrated that Ziera represented a viable option. It positioned Ziera shoppers as smart – women who care about fashion, but refuse to become slaves to it.

The theme of 'Fashion As It Should Be' then extended into brochures, web banners and in-store material.

Communications Strategy

The campaign worked across two distinct phases to reach the style-savvy new audience, and those already familiar with Ziera. Importantly, it needed to feel familiar to the secondary audience, so they'd relate the activity to the brand they already identified with.

The first phase used video content to highlight the craziness of fashion with a focus on engagement, watch-ability and share-ability, rather than sales. It sought to challenge the status quo in a cheeky, potentially confrontational way, an approach specifically designed to make an impact on social networks.

Facebook and Instagram were key to building engagement and reach, with a combination of owned pages plus paid support. The content was delivered in an impactful visual style that didn't rely on sound, so the film also caught the attention of users who saw it mute while scrolling their social feeds.

The second phase occurred through print, in-store and owned channels tied together with the line 'Fashion As It Should Be'. Each piece was designed specifically to reinforce Ziera's new fashion credentials in a more familiar manner, appealing equally to newer customers and existing fans, who were more likely to encounter the campaign via in-store POS or mailer first.

A partnership with Bauer showcased the range in *Next* magazine (which over indexes with style conscious women 40+), to reinforce the range's legitimate style credentials when worn with the latest trends. The editorial was fresh, representing a significant departure from the more expected styling of the Ziera of old. This was further augmented by a large investment in PR to ensure other media picked up on the game-changing lift in style the new range represented.

Results

The 'Fashion As It Should Be Campaign' led directly to impressive sales boosts for Ziera during the Autumn/Winter season, doubling the commercial sales objectives.

Online coverage exceeded expectations too, with the video content seen by 1.4 million people in New Zealand and Australia in the first two days. By the end of the campaign it had 2.099 million views across all social media and digital platforms. Video views on Facebook were 1,452,970 with completion rates at 29.28% versus an industry standard of approximately 10%. These were double the anticipated targets for this activity.

In the first two days of the video release, new customer visits to the website increased by 43%. Unique visits to the website also increased during the campaign period by 30% compared with the same months in AW15.

The campaign also received national coverage on TVNZ's *Breakfast* show.